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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 18 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Acting on instructions from my Government, and further to my earlier letters concerning the aggression and the practices engaged in by the Israeli forces in southern Lebanon and the occupied areas, I wish to inform you that Israel has expanded the area it occupies in southern Lebanon to include the village of Arnoun.

On 17 January 1999 in the evening, a joint force composed of Israeli soldiers and agents of the "South Lebanon Army" equipped with trucks, cranes and military vehicles surrounded Arnoun with barbed wire and set up a barrier at the entrance to the village. The inhabitants of Arnoun were informed that their village was surrounded, that it was henceforth part of the so-called "security belt" and that Arnoun Lake was now the border separating the village from the liberated areas.

This new Israeli aggression, whereby the occupied area was expanded, comes at a time when the Israeli leaders, within the context of their election campaign, are constantly talking about a withdrawal from Lebanon and an end of the occupation of the Lebanese territories in order to win votes.

The Lebanese Government wishes to inform the Secretary-General and members of the Security Council of this grave development, and urges them to act promptly to restore the status quo ante. It also draws attention to the need to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) whereby the Council called for Israel's unconditional withdrawal to internationally recognized boundaries.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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